

**MINUTES for
Digital Filmmaking Production Advisory Committee Meeting**

Meeting Date: 6:30pm PST, Thursday 2024-11-14

2024-25 Digital Media Advisory Board

In-person and on Zoom at:

<https://santarosa-edu.zoom.us/j/8828564530?omn=88113008592>

Meeting ID: 882 856 4530

All 5 members present: Morgan Hamilton-Lee, Austin Smagalski, Miles Levin, Williams, Kyle B, Rutherford, Sullivan.

And the following guests: Lauralyn Larsen, Devon Leher, Tanya Sierra, Candice Penland, Ben Howard, Adrian Hernandez, Dominic Sbrocco, David L. Minard, Douglas, Brandon Douglas, Zach Tracy, Susie Heyden, Ariana Victor, Devon Leher.

The ZOOM recording of meeting can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EocoKesAfqrEjciRn6SVpUHPVch3jZ3L/view?usp=sharing>

Points discussed at this meeting:

6:30 pm

- Brian Antonson introduced himself and gave the new advisory board an overview of the program and it's goals and the goal of this meeting. He asked each board member to:
 - Discuss their unique work related experiences in their different professional fields
 - relate their own college and transfer to 4-schools when relevant.

6:38pm

- Lauralyn Larsen began the introductions. She is the Internship coordinator for SRJC. Helps students find internship or related work experience. Mentoring, Shadowing, or anything in the field. Post on SRJC job bank if you want to participate.
- Ariana Victor: Transferred to Chapman university in 2015. Studied film production and directing. Love of documentaries grew with passion for activism. After graduating from Chapman, she followed the "Bayer Monsanto Round of Trials" in SF. Has been mainly working as an independent filmmaker. She tends to lean towards more controversial topics and because of this sometimes has issues with gaining funding for projects. She directs, edits, and produces all her projects.

- Sullivan: Started journey at SRJC with Media20. Didn't finish the program, but went on to be a background actor on the Television show "Thirteen Reasons Why." Pitched to them he wanted to be a PA, and they made it happen. Most recently worked on Twisters, West World, and "A handful of marvel movies." Has been grinding at the bottom of the totem pole for the last 8 years. Has shifted to saying yes to Assistant Director roles and no to PA job offers.
- David Minard: Went to Emeryville "Ex'pression College" for Digital Arts, and graduated from their sound engineering bachelor's program in 2010. That's how he got into production sound. Worked in a music studio for 5 years as well as doing short films on the side. Got sick of it, and then fell in love with production work. Left the studio and started really doing film production. Has been doing a mix of sound, photography, and video as a freelance digital worker for the last 8 years. Believes he has to wear as many "hats" as necessary to survive. More recently he had been working on Myles Levin's film "Under the Lights."
- Austin Smagalski: Went to JC, then transferred to Monterey State and then moved to LA the day after he graduated. As an editor, his day job eventually became him cutting the TV show "True Crime." Has directed 2 individual feature films. In 2018 he shot his first feature film. Was primarily shot in Petaluma with a largely local crew. Premiered at the SF Independent Film Festival, and has gotten distribution so it is watchable to the general public. Has worked, and is still working for "Vice" as an editor. Primarily as the editor for "United Gangs of America." Most recently has shot his 2nd feature film, which David Minard (from above) did the sound for. Has been playing Festivals since February, and continues to win awards. Is in the process of putting up a theatrical run. Is currently working on a documentary about dog rescues that he's been working on for the last couple of years.
- Brandon Douglas: 2 full years at the JC. Media20 & 21. Transferred down to Biola University for film School for the last 2 years. Has been working on shorts for students from Chapman, and UCLA. Paid about 20 grand for the program at Biola. Doesn't necessarily recommend film school, citing that he's met a lot of people who didn't and just started gigging. "It's really hard." Has been working on a plethora of shorts and feature films. Says Film school "forces you to make stuff." Has worked at an animation school in Petaluma called, "Lightstream Animation." Got to work on "crappy" feature and a couple various animated short films. Learned lots of Visual Effects pipelines. Worked at a startup production company for 4 years doing lots of commercial work as their "Cinematographer / Editor." Continues to make shorts and feature films on the side, but prefers not to be associated with Hollywood. "I kinda want to do my own indie thing."
- Zach Tracy: Started JC film classes in Spring 2017 with Media20. Finished associates degree in 2018 and transferred to CSU Northridge, but dropped out during Covid. Zach didn't have a great time at CSUN, stating that he didn't learn as much there as he learned at the JC, and his units didn't transfer over. He was promised that it would, but had to retake all the intro production classes. The school wouldn't let him take the upper level classes that he needed for his degree, and stated that he would be there for at least 3 years. "I don't think there're not really motivated to [get you out in 2 years] because funding comes from time spent at their school... that's how it felt at least." In 2018, he started working at a few production companies in Sonoma County. Bay Area Media Masters, Brown Barn, and started a

company called “Lemons for Friends,” and Brandon Douglas works with him. Worked with True West Film Center, once was AV Fest. Has been doing a lot of corporate videos, wineries, real estate, and has worked on at least one feature film since 2022. Worked on a documentary that’s currently in the festival circuit, as well as some shorts of his own.

- Benjamin Howard: Currently Lives in LA. Grew up in San Diego and moved to Sonoma county for a total of 9 months to take film classes at the JC. Made an attempt to Transfer to San Diego state, but was promptly denied. Instead of giving up, he wrote an email to the head of the department asking to be reconsidered, and then was admitted, staying there for a couple of years, graduating in 2017. Made a dozen projects while he was there, “several short films, some music videos, commercial work.” Created the “Windsor Film Company” based on the town he lived in while he was here in Sonoma County. Did some freelance work for a while, corporate videos, video editing, or commercial work. Worked as a teacher teaching young adults with developmental disabilities filmmaking techniques. Got into UCLA for grad school in 2018 and stayed for 2 years before taking a year off during covid. On that break, he started writing a feature film, which was based on a short film he had created prior. When life went “back to normal” he went to complete his 3rd and final year at UCLA, now producing the same script he had written, as his thesis film. The finished feature has had a festival run over the last year or so, and will be distributed Q1 of 2025. “No one’s gonna want to make your movie. Only you.”
- Susie Heyden: Took Film classes at the JC. Transferred to UC Santa Cruz for their 2 year program, and has been living there ever since. At UC Santa Cruz all of the units transferred over so they only had to do film classes. The film program at SC is based on theory and research, and is a little bit less hands-on. You can learn hands-on stuff on set, but not theory. She believes that it was worth it, and has made connections from the school. Local Santa Cruz production company, “Lincoln Street Studios, was looking for crew for their web series, and Suzie AC’d for them. Continuing to get AC work from them and their connections, eventually getting paid to do a lot of corporate work behind the camera. During covid, they started to get more post-production and editing work, and that’s where they stayed. More recently has been working on writing, to make their own things again.
- Tanya Sierra: Came to the JC after she had gotten her bachelors in Business from Sonoma State. In 2016 is when she started the film program, eventually graduating in 2018. In 2019, Applied and got into Layola Marymount in LA, but only had one good year before Covid hit. A very collaborative program. At other film schools only 3 people get to make films, but at Layola everyone was able to be making films. There were a lot of “permitting” requirements which made things very restrictive when you’re asked to make a number of short films over the semester. Didn’t end up going back after covid, stating, “What I did at the JC was more of what I wanted to do. There were more open possibilities to do whatever.” Is currently the acting executive director at the “Sebastopol Community Cultural Center.” Mostly doing event productions. Putting on concerts, talks, etc. She states that she’s using a lot of the production training to work, as she does “a lot with very little.” Has received a grant to do a short film, and plans to start shooting it very soon.
- Candace Penland & Devin: Lives in LA with Devin, her partner, and has been there for 3 years. Originally from Sonoma County, has a bachelor's degree in psychology from Sonoma State. Over the summer, she started working on the TV show, “Thirteen Reasons Why” as

an actor. Went to school the JC taking acting classes, but took Media20 in Spring 2017. Which started her behind the camera journey. In 2018, Devin and her started a production company to start doing corporate videos, and commercial work, as well a feature that has yet to be finished. Was a finalist at the "Sundance native lab" due to their native heritage. 2020, started taking online LA acting classes. Since then, has been making some short films. Of which, some have gotten into local festivals. Was granted an internship in LA from a local producer, and has lived in LA ever since. Currently works as a horse trainer and a body worker. Shifted to more freelance work in acting, and AD work. Working on as many short films as she could. There have been a lot of layoffs since the strikes in 2023 from the writers and actors, and work wasn't the same during Spring and Summer of 24'. Forcing a lot of people to focus on their other interests. Creates Horse Training content on social media. Devin has been doing a lot of martial arts with a person who did fight coordinating work for the Mad Max movies.

- Kyle Williams: Started in 2011 as a marine biology major. Wanted to be on shark week, but it got "too sciency." Always wanted to do video work, ever since High School. Took Media4 class as a communications major, and fell in love Brian's classes. Eventually transferring to SJSU, but still feels like they learned more from Brian's Media20 class than a lot of the other years of film school. Gaining a lot of experience by rotating different production positions. Falling in love with the storytelling aspect of film. Has worked on a lot of documentary style videos and storytelling. Taking as many opportunities to make a video, mostly with marketing. Applied to San Jose Shark as their video guy, and but was denied because he had never filmed Hockey. Taking it as a learning experience he started filming Hockey games at the school, and reapplied eventually getting the job. Filming with the sharks from 2017 to 2020. Moved to Sierra Tahoe because it's his happy place, "It's the best place, all around." Using a lot of journalism around Tahoe for different businesses. Worked at Sea World in San Diego as their video guy for 2 years. Currently working in New York, doing the same thing he's always done.
- Adrian Hernandez: Started his journey in Media10 where he met a couple acquaintances in that class who had him start shooting the night club activity. 2017, he got serious about school, and only took Media classes. In 2019, he became brian's PAL. Started doing nightlife photography, production work, and joined his buddies company for free. It unfortunately went under, but has since recreated a new one. Doing non-profit commercial work. Has been given a lot of support from the SRJC, but also from the Sonoma County International Film Festival. Adrian does all of the video work for the festival with his friend. Gaining access to a large amount of equipment. He still does it to this day.
- Nick Sbrocco: Graduated from the program in 2022. Transferred to UC Riverside for 2 years. Recommends the school to anyone that doesn't want to go right to LA. Solid option. Not right next to LA, but has great professors. Gear is solid. Also had an issue with having to take some intro classes. Applied to grad schools, and got into Loyola Marymount for writing and producing for TV. Has been there from the start of the Fall 24' semester. Has been gigging here and there, but building the network. Getting adjusted between LA and the difference between undergrad and grad school. Has been working on short films ever since the JC. He states that the Media19, Multi-cam production, and Media18, Production Audio, are classes that he hasn't seen taught anywhere else. "I haven't taken any class like that so, I think the

JC's kind of ahead with that class." Just released a short doc on prop 6 on the California ballot, and it did not pass so he's going to follow up with another one regarding the more recent news. Has been very interested in documentary and short films, and has been preparing things for next year.

- Myles Levin: Started 2013/14. Made a short film in 2018, about his own condition of Epilepsy, and has since then created the feature film titled, "Under the Lights." Filmed in Sonoma County with a lot of the students from our program. "It took the LA people a while to understand that we knew what we were doing... we, in fact, know our shit." Currently in post-production effects. Something that is not learned in film school is how to sell and package your film as a product. Had to sell himself.
- Morgan Hamilton-Lee: Took Media20 around 2013 / 14. Has been deeper in the program than anyone else. In 2017, is when he started his own production company, "TrickyInkProductions." Lots of acting, producing and helping other people with their films. Has been in over a dozen films, just at the JC. Has worked on over 100+ projects. Has lots of connections, and has promoted the program like crazy.

8:30pm – sign off